

PROPOSAL
FOR RETRIEVING the
SINKING STATE

OF THE

Good Town of Edinburgh, K

Humbly offered to the

CONSIDERATION

OF ALL ITS

HONEST BURGESSES and
WELL-WISHERS.



E D I N B U R G H:

Printed for Messieurs DAVIDSON and TRAIL, and sold
at their Shop in the Parliament-Close, 1737.

PROPOSAL

For Retaining a House

SINKING STATE

OF THE

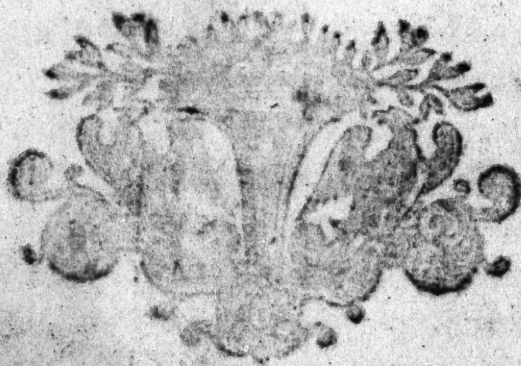
Good Town of Edinburgh

Humbly offered to the

CONSIDERATION

OF THE

HONEST MEN
WELL TO DO



Printed by J. D. N. & Co. at their Shop in the Strand, 1797.



PROPOSAL for Retrieving
the Sinking State of the Good
Town of Edinburgh,

Humbly offered to
The Consideration of all its *Honest*
Burgesses and Well-wishers.

THIS the great Happiness of a People,
to live under a Government, where
every Man may write his Thoughts
with Freedom, and under an Administration,
from which it may be expected, that every Pro-
posal offered for the Service of the Common-
wealth, will be impartially weighed, and care-
fully considered.

THERE is not any one Thing of greater
Importance to a Country, than a well-formed
Constitution of Government in its principal Ci-
ties. This not only tends to secure to the In-
habitants

bitants their most valuable Interests; but it will communicate its good Effects to the whole Country round, as the general Riches of a Nation must be considerably affected by the Prosperity or Decay of its trading Cities.

THIS Part of the United Kingdom has long observed the declining State of the City of *Edinburgh*, and we who are Burgeses, daily feel it to our Cost; one visible Cause is, its Distance from the Seat of Government, and the want of Parliaments and Privy Council, which before the Union brought up to it every Year almost all our Nobility, and the richest Part of our Gentry; and so far as our Misfortunes arise from this Cause, 'tis in vain to hope for a Remedy.

BUT if we look into the Bottom of Things, we shall find a great Part of our Distemper owing, not to any Thing without us, but to our own sickly Constitution; the Luxury and Immorality of our Inhabitants, the Proneness of the lower Sort to Tumult and Faction, the high Price of Vivers; nay, and the Decay of our Trade too, do, in a great Measure, arise from a Defect in the political Constitution of our City's Government, these admit of a Cure, and we may reasonably hope to be a happy and flourishing City, if that Constitution, or Sett of our Burgh be quite cancell'd, and another take Place, which shall be more suitable to our present Circumstances.

EVERY

EVERY Burghs is sensible of the Lameness of the present Sett of our Burgh; and if we consider, that when it was framed, the Nation was but creeping out of Barbarity, the Arts of Government less understood, and the City not near so large and populous as now, we need not be surpris'd, that it is not adapted to the present Age, or the present State of the Burgh.

'TIS unnecessary to enter into a minute Discussion of the Particulars, wherein the present Sett appears defective; but it must strike every Observer, at first Sight, That the Magistrates are too few; that the Societies in it are ill regulated; and the Method of Election inconvenient, and too liable to create Disputes.

TO this we may add the frequent Change in the Magistracy, which must naturally produce fluctuating Counsels, and greatly obstruct a steady Course of Government: For it is not enough that proper Regulations and By-laws be enacted, for the Encouragement of Trade, or for the Ease and Safety of the Inhabitants, if they are not likewise carried into Execution, by a constant and steady Administration. It is to no Purpose to form rational Schemes for the Good of the Community, unless these be kept in close View by the Governors, and pursued to their proper Ends; and these are Advantages we cannot hope for so long as, by the very Frame of our Constitution, the Government must

must yearly devolve upon a new Sett of Magistrates, perhaps intirely ignorant of the Views of their Predecessors; and who therefore must form new Plans of their own; but under the same Disadvantage of being oblig'd to drop them half executed at the End of their short Administration.

IF these, and the other Errors in our Constitution of Government, were rectified, what great and good Effects will it not produce? Our Trade would be then enlarg'd, and new Branches of Business establish'd by proper Regulations and Encouragements: Our Laws would be put to punctual Execution: Peace and Order would be preserved in the City; and the several Societies in it kept up to the strict Observance of their respective Rules. Immorality, Luxury, and Idleness would be more effectually suppress'd, and Virtue and Industry encourag'd. In a Word, the Magistrates would be truly honour'd, and the People truly happy.

THESE are not chimerical Suppositions, but the natural Consequences of a proper Constitution of Government: And if it were necessary to support so plain a Point from Examples, we have the strongest Instance of what mighty Things a right-modell'd Constitution is able to do. In the City of *Amsterdam*, which, in Spite of its natural Disadvantages, in Point of Situation, has, by the mere Force of good Govern-

ment,

ment, and a steady, well conducted Administration, in a Manner ingrossed the Trade of *Holland*, and is number'd amongst the first trading Cities in *Europe*.

BUT it may be said, That however another and more perfect Sett of the Burgh were to be desired, we can have no Prospect of obtaining it. New Charters are seldom granted by the Crown; and at the same Time, our own unhappy Party-divisions are come to such an absurd Height, that we seldom see any Proposal made, let it be ever so beneficial for the Country; but it is immediately lookt upon as a Contrivance of designing Men, to favour one of the contending Sides, and for that Reason is heartily opposed by the other.

AS to the *first*, 'Tis agreed that the Crown does not, except upon the most weighty Considerations, grant new Charters to Burghs, by which their old Constitution of Government is alter'd; but if ever there was Reason for such a Change, there is in the present Case; neither do we want Precedents for it, of which there is one very similar to this. In the Case of the City of *London*, the Aldermen of that City were at first chosen yearly, as our Magistrates are; but upon an Application to *Richard II.* representing the Inconveniencies that attended such a continued Flux in the Administration; the King ordain'd, That the Aldermen should not for thereafter be removed, except for honest and

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reasonable Causes; and this Change in their Government was afterwards confirm'd by Parliament.

BUT this is not all, the present Con-
juncture, is so very favourable for such an Ap-
plication, that Providence seems to have laid
it in our Way; and we have no Reason to ex-
pect, that if we let slip this Opportunity, we
shall ever have such another. The Enquiry in-
to the Causes of the late Riots here, which is
presently depending before the House of Peers,
cannot fail of giving that *August* Assembly a
just Notion of the defective Constitution of our
City; and due Reflection upon it will soon sa-
tisfy his Majesty, that a new and right Consti-
tution is the only proper Remedy to be ap-
plied for preventing such Disorders for the
future, as have given Occasion to the present
Inquiry. 'Tis needless to enlarge upon this
Head, since it must be obvious upon the slight-
est View, that we have at this present Time
such a favourable Concurrence of Circumstan-
ces, for an Application of this Sort, as we ne-
ver had before, and in human Appearance,
will never have again while *Edinburgh* is a City.

AS to the other Objection, that arises from
our woful Party-Divisions, there is alas! too
much Truth in the Fact. But to whatever
Height these unlucky Differences may have
grown, may we not hope, that there are some
Points so national, and so evidently calculated
for

for the Interest of the Country, that all Denominations of Men will unite in promoting them. Upon this no less depends, than the Preservation of our City from utter Ruin; and where that is at Stake, let us lay aside our Party-prejudices and Animosities, and yve with one another, who shall do most to retrieve our broken, and daily more and more decaying Condition. A true Countryman ought to be of no Faction, especially in such a Cause: And if there is a hearty and unanimous Concurrence of the whole Burgeses in this Measure, it must convince His Majesty, that we are not conducted by any selfish Party-Interest, but have singly at Heart the Welfare and Prosperity of a very considerable Body of his loyal Subjects; and while we act from such Principles, we have all Reason to expect, that our Gracious Sovereign will have a just Regard to our dutiful Application.

THE Method humbly suggested for setting this Matter a-Foot, is, That the Burgeses, Heritors, and other Inhabitants do signify their Consent, by subscribing a Paper for that Purppse, That Application be made to his Majesty, for abolishing the old Sett of the Burgh, and granting a new Charter, with a Constitution of Government, more adapted to the present Circumstances of the Place; and this will serve as a Foundation for what is further to be done, and for the principal Burgeses, in Name of the whole Subscribers, to invite the Magistrates and

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Town-counselors to concur with this Measure, who will, no doubt, readily join in every Step, that can contribute to a Measure so necessary for the Welfare of that City, whereof by Office they are the present Guardians.

IT may be reasonably askt, what it is that ought to be substituted in Place of the present Sett of the Burgh, and no doubt that must be well digested before Application is made to His Majesty or Parliament; but it would be preposterous to attempt any Thing of this Sort, till the Burgeses previously signify their Consent to such Alteration. How soon this is done, those of the Burgeses who are best acquainted with the Situation and Circumstances of the City, ought in a Case of common Concern to assist their Brethren in concerting a new Sett for the Burgh, where due Regard may be had, both to the Interest of the City in general, and to that of every one of its several Societies, and Incorporations in particular.

IT might be thought too assuming to offer any Thing positive in a Question of such Importance; yet it may be for their Service to suggest to our Brethrens Consideration, whether the Constitution of the City of *London*, might not be the most proper Pattern for us to copy after: It has been now approv'd for many Ages; and there is no City in *Europe*, considering its large Extent, and constant Hurry of
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Business, where there is such beautiful Order, and such Security to the Inhabitants; some Variations may be necessary; but these will easily occur, upon comparing the different Circumstances of the two Cities. However, this is offered with the greatest Deference; but as it is the Interest of every Burgess, for his own Sake, to have the most perfect Model possible, we have no Reason to doubt, that the greatest Care will be taken to form such a Sett, as will give intire Satisfaction to the whole Community.

IF our Brethren are convinced, that this is the only visible Way to recover the City from Decay and Disorder, it only remains, that they proceed to it with the utmost Dispatch: It is of the greatest Importance, that Application be made to the King or Parliament, before the present Enquiries are brought to a Period; it must appear to His Majesty in a much stronger and more favourable Light, when these very Disorders, which have proceeded from a Defect in the Constitution to be complained of, are immediately under His Royal Consideration; so that a very short Delay may be of the most fatal Consequence.

UPON such an Occasion, we may reasonably hope for the Assistance, not only of the Burgesses and other Inhabitants, whose Interest is immediately concern'd, but of the Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood, the Value of whose Estates

Estates very much depends upon the thriving Condition of the City.

IF after all, this Measure, through groundless Jealousies and Divisions amongst our selves, should miscarry, those who have shewed themselves ready to concur in it, will have the Satisfaction to think, they have done their Duty to themselves, their Country and Posterity, in endeavouring, so far as they were able, to retrieve and restore a sinking Community, while its Opposers will have the melancholy Reflection, that they stood in the Way of the fairest Opportunity that ever offer'd itself to them for the publick Interest, and that they must be justly accountable for the unhappy Consequences of their Opposition.

IT needs no Apology, that Burgeses in a private Character, should offer their Sentiments in a Case of so publick a Concern; besides the Interest they have in the Prosperity of the City, as Burgeses, 'tis their Duty, as well as the Right of every Man, to assist his Country by his Advice, when it is so loudly call'd for. Nothing could have forc'd to give it in so publick a Manner, but a full Conviction, that there is no other Way to save us from Ruin: And if the Proposal is listned to, and followed with the same honest Intention that it is offered, we shall not despair of seeing the City of *Edinburgh*, in a short Time, in as flourishing, as it is now, in a miserable and decay'd Condition.

F I N I S

